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Police Boss Galls Journalists

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... Says He Does Not Do Policing Work In The Media



David Asante
Apeatu, IGP

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCOP) Vincent Redeemer Dedjo, Upper East Regional Police Commander, has incurred the wrath of journalists in the region, following a comment that he does not do his policing in the media.

If the cliché by some top police officers that “Policing is a shared responsibility” is anything to go by, then the police will not be successful without the media, because the media is the mouthpiece of the general public, which the policing institution is mandated to serve.

However, on Saturday May 13, when members of two royal gates in the Bolgatanga chieftaincy dispute -Abilba and Apakre gates – clashed, resulting in the death of two persons, all journalists who sought to enquire from the police on how they were responding to the disturbances, were rudely ignored by the Police Commander.

Instead of simply providing members of the Fourth Estate of the realm with information on the true state of affairs regarding the conflict, DCOP Dedjo rudely snubbed them. He said he does not do his policing in the media.

When this reporter contacted the Commander on Sunday to find out whether the police had made some arrests in connection with the renewed clashes, he rudely told the reporter: "I don't do my policing in the media. I have put all the necessary security measures in place, and that is what is important to me." When this reporter asked him: "Sir, do you mean you will not confirm or otherwise, any arrests?" He retorted: "I said policing is not about talking in the media, but about doing the right thing, and I have done so."

It was clear DCOP Dedjo was not willing to speak to any journalists who called him on phone on the matter, not because they called him on phone, but because he claims policing and media have nothing in common, as far as he is concerned. Some journalists even complained that was not the first time he was rude to them. They said, even in his office, he is not media-friendly.

Outraged by his rude posture, some of the inky professionals in the region have resolved to ignore the police, especially the Regional Commander, in their reportage, not only on the chieftaincy matter, but also to boycott any programme his administration may seek media coverage for.

Until his transfer to the Upper East Region in February this year, DCOP Vincent Redeemer Dedjo was the Volta Regional Police Commander. He took over from DCOP Simon Afeku during a major shakeup in the police administration this year.

December 2014 report

This is not the first time the police have put up such an attitude towards journalists. In December 2014, **The Chronicle** carried a similar report about the conduct of the police. The following is how the said incident was reported.

Senior police officers in the Upper East Regional have become hostile and snobbish to journalists. Some of the journalists in the region say whenever they approach the police for information, and sometimes confirmation or otherwise over certain issues, they are unwilling, hostile and snobbish.

This obdurate stance by the police has angered most journalists, and they have resolved to blacklist the police in their reportage. As a result, some affected journalists have resolved not to attend any programme organised by the police, until the Police Command explains and apologises for its incessant failure to address the issue.

The behaviour of the police has also angered the Regional Chairman of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Mr. Eric Amoh, who has sent a strong reminder to the police hierarchy in the region that they were not an island.

Speaking this reporter, Mr. Amoh said: "You see, there are some of the police officers who do not have communication sense, and once they do not have the communication sense, they use their position as protection. They think that once they are police, they are untouchable."

He stated in clear terms that though the media could not force out information from the police, the most important thing was that the police in the region needed to be schooled on the importance of information in this critical era, where the people have been empowered with the social media, through which they could read and write anything. He stated: "At a point, when people do not get information, they burst out and anything goes."

"It is time we let them know that the public needs the information, and it is their duty to give it out. They police shouldn't think that they are an island. If people are not there to police, what is your work as a police officer? It is the same people who need the information from you, the police," he said.

Recently, the Bolgatanga Municipal Police Commander, Christian Bortsi, verbally assaulted this reporter when he sought from him a confirmation or otherwise of a lynching incident in the Municipality. Before this verbal assault, the Regional Crime Officer, Supt. Alex Asamoah-Frimpong, had also seized copies of a press statement the Regional Commander had read, and asked his PRO to make copies for reporters who were at that press briefing, which was addressed by the Commander.

The Crime Officer's explanation for seizing the statement was that it was not meant for the public. Though the reporters resisted giving out their copies, after a few minutes of resistance, they returned the copies and left his office in anger.

Following the collapse of an illegal mining pit at Gbane in the Talensi District, a **Daily Graphic** reporter, Mr. Alhandu Abdul-Hamid, and Madam Fati Astinga of the **GNA** were also snubbed by the Regional Police Commander, DCOP Simon Afeku, when the two approached to greet him.

According to them, they had gone to the Regional Headquarters to see the PRO over the accident, but when they got there, the PRO was not in the office. They then greeted the Staff Officer on duty, and informed him of their mission. They said, in a chat, the Staff Officer encouraged them to just greet the Regional Commander, who was then with the Deputy Regional Minister, Mr. Daniel Syme, while they waited for the PRO.

After they had greeted the Commander and he responded, the next thing he said to them was that he would not speak on the matter, because he was not the Police PRO. Apparently, he thought they were coming to him for information on the incident. Knowing very well that they were not going to him to speak on the matter, and weighing his harsh and unwarranted remark, the journalists left despondently.

Still on the same mining incident, this reporter also had a similar experience, when the Regional Crime Officer declined to speak to him at Gbane where the accident occurred. According to the Crime Officer, since Mr. Daniel Syme had declined to talk to the reporter, he would not also speak. As if that was not enough, he went further to say that he was not the PRO of the police in the region.

Responding to all these issues, the GJA Chairman said he saw a very big vacuum in the police administration, in terms of communication. He said he suspected the Regional Security Council would have met and resolved not speak to the media. His suspicion was based on the grounds that the Regional Police PRO, ASP Thomas Agbanyon, had also declined to speak to the media two days after the incident occurred.

From William Jalulah, Bolgatanga

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